

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSM-03 OMB-01 IO-13
CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 SCA-01
SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 DHA-02 ACDA-07 /108 W
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P R 281602Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3838
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE 253
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1977

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION APRIL 22-28

REF: BEIRUT 1839 (DTG 220948Z APR 77)

1. SUMMARY: THIS WEEK HEAVY FIGHTING BROKE OUT BETWEEN THE
ARAB SECURITY FORCES AND PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS IN WEST
BEIRUT, AND SHELLING RESUMED BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND
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CHRISTIANS IN THE SOUTH. PRIME MINISTER AL-HOSS SAID THAT
"CONTACTS ARE UNDERWAY TO RETURN THE INHABITANTS OF DAMOUR
TO THEIR HOMES." THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MADE APPOINT-
MENTS TO 98 HIGH CIVIL SERVICE POSTS. PRESIDENT SARKIS MET
WITH KFUR FRONT LEADERS. AMIN ARAYASSI, PRESIDENT OF
THE "NATIONAL ORGANIZATION," SAID HE WAS FORMING A NEW
"NATIONAL FRONT." THE ALAWITES DEMANDED THREE SEATS IN

PARLIAMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. HEAVY FIGHTING IN WEST BEIRUT.

A. THIS WEEK THERE WAS HEAVY FIGHTING BETWEEN THE ARAB SECURITY FORCES (ASF) AND PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS IN WEST BEIRUT JUST NORTH OF THE SABRA PALESTINIAN CAMP. ACCORDING TO LEBANESE MILITARY SOURCES, THE ASF SUFFERED 15 KILLED AND 20 WOUNDED, AND LOST SEVEN ARMORED VEHICLES; PALESTINIAN CASUALTIES WERE UNKNOWN, BUT ABOUT 24 FEDAYEEN WERE TAKEN PRISONER. AT LEAST 100 CIVILIANS WERE KILLED OR WOUNDED. DAMAGE TO BUILDINGS IN THE AREA WAS EXTENSIVE.

B. THE INCIDENT BEGAN ON APRIL 22, WHEN FOUR REJECTIONISTS KILLED TWO SYRIAN SOLDIERS ATTEMPTING TO ARREST THEM. THE SYRIAN RETALIATED BY LAUNCHING A CLEARING OPERATION IN THE CORNICHE MAZRAA AND HAI AL SABIL NEIGHBORHOODS OF WEST BEIRUT. ON APRIL 24 THERE WAS INTENSE FIGHTING, WITH THE SYRIANS USING TANKS AND INFANTRY IN AN ATTEMPT TO ROOT OUT FEDAYEEN FIGHTING FROM APARTMENT HOUSES.

C. A TENSE CEASE-FIRE PUNCTUATED ONLY BY SNIPER FIRE PREVAILED BY APRIL 25. IN A GESTURE OF OVERT COOPERATION WITH THE SYRIANS, FATAH MILITARY POLICE ENTERED THE AREA AND WARNED THAT ANYONE WITH A WEAPON WOULD BE SHOT ON SIGHT. ON APRIL 26, THE ASF ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE SAYING "THE SITUATION HAS RETURNED TO NORMAL" AND PEOPLE COULD "AGAIN USE THE ROADS" IN THE AREA.

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3. THE SOUTH.

ON APRIL 21, FOLLOWERS OF THE ABU ABBAS FACTION OF THE PFLP/GC REPORTEDLY AMBUSHED A SAIQA PATROL AND KILLED THREE OF ITS MEMBERS. BOTH SIDES THEN SET UP ROADBLOCKS ALONG THE MAIN COAST ROAD SOUTH OF THE LITANI BRIDGE. FARTHER SOUTH, SHELLING RESUMED BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIANS. IT WAS PARTICULARLY INTENSE NEAR NABATIYAH AND CAUSED THE CIVILIAN POPULATION TO AGAIN FLEE THE CITY, WHERE ONLY PALESTINIAN AND LEBANESE LEFTIST COMBATANTS NOW REMAIN.

4. RETURN TO DAMOUR.

PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL-HOSS TOLD THE PRESS ON APRIL 22 THAT "CONTACTS ARE UNDERWAY TO RETURN THE (ORIGINAL CHRISTIAN) INHABITANTS OF DAMOUR TO THEIR HOMES," AND THAT "A PIECE OF LAND HAS BEEN ASSIGNED TO THE PALESTINIANS" NOW OCCUPYING THE TOWN. SEVERAL PAPERS SAID THE NEW SITE FOR THE

PALESTINIANS WAS AT AL BAISARIYAH, BETWEEN SIDON AND TYRE.

5. NEW CIVIL SERVICE APPOINTMENTS.

A. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MADE APPOINTMENTS TO 98 HIGH CIVIL SERVICE POSTS ON APRIL 27. CHEHAVISTS LOYAL TO PRESIDENT SARKIS WON KEY POSITIONS.

B. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS RESPECTED THE TRADITIONAL CONFESSIONAL DISTRIBUTION IN TERMS OF TOTALS, BUT NOT IN TERMS OF THE RIGHT OF A PARTICULAR SECT TO A PARTICULAR POST. THE CURRENT APPOINTMENTS DID NOT INCLUDE JUDICIAL OR DIPLOMATIC POSTS, WHICH ARE EXPECTED TO BE CONSIDERED IN MID-MAY, OR MILITARY POSTS, WHICH SHOULD BE ANNOUNCED SHORTLY (SEPTTEL).

6. KFUR FRONT SEES SARKIS.

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PRESIDENT SARKIS MET WITH KFUR FRONT LEADERS CAMILLE CHAMOUN, SULEIMAN FRANGIEH, PIERRE GEMAYEL, AND CHARBEL KASSIS ON APRIL 26. CHAMOUN SAID AFTERWARDS THAT HE HAD TOLD SARKIS THAT WHILE THE FRONT STILL RETAINED CONFIDENCE IN SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASAD, IT WOULD PERSIST IN ITS DEMANDS FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS. CHAMOUN REMARKED HE HAD ALSO ASKED SARKIS EITHER TO MAINTAIN BRANCHES OF THE LEBANESE UNIVERSITY IN BOTH EAST AND WEST BEIRUT OR CREATE TWO NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES.

7. NEW NATIONAL FRONT.

AMIN ARAYASSI, PRESIDENT OF THE CONSERVATIVE MUSLIM "NATIONAL ORGANIZATION," TOLD THE EMBASSY ON APRIL 24 THAT HE WAS FORMING A NEW "NATIONAL FRONT," WHICH WOULD INCLUDE MICHEL KHOURY'S CONSTITUTIONAL BLOC, RAYMOND EDDE'S NATIONAL BLOC, ADNAN AL HAKIM'S PARAMILITARY "NAJJADE" AND NAJIB ABU HAYDAR'S RAS BEIRUT FRONT. ARAYASSI SAID THE FRONT'S MAJOR PURPOSE WOULD BE TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT SARKIS. ARAYASSI ALSO INDICATED THE FRONT ASPIRED TO BECOME THE PRINCIPAL VEHICLE FOR A POLITICAL DIALOGUE IN LEBANON (SEPTTEL).

8. ALAWITES DEMAND REPRESENTATION.

THE ALAWITE FRATERNAL SOCIETY HAS SUBMITTED A MEMORANDUM TO PRESIDENT SARKIS DEMANDING THAT THE ALAWITE COMMUNITY IN LEBANON BE TREATED "JUSTLY," THE PHALANGIST LEBANESE NEWS AGENCY REPORTED ON APRIL 26. THE MEMORANDUM CALLED ON PRESIDENT SARKIS TO GIVE THE ALAWITES THREE SEATS IN PARLIAMENT, "REPRESENTATION IN THE GOVERNMENT THROUGHT AT

LEAST ONE MINISTER," AND OTHER POSTS.

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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